

**PUBLIC HEARING RE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

Joshua Seavey  
February 15, 2013

Hello - my name is Joshua Seavey, and I am a current resident of Stratford, Connecticut. I am a person in recovery from co-occurring psychiatric and neurological diagnoses.

I have accessed tailored mental health services through the organization of Bridge House, Inc. for (HOW MANY YEARS). Bridge House provides assistance to individuals with psychiatric diagnosis to achieve their desired housing, employment, educational, and social goals.

The organization operates through both private donations and state funding. As a community based mental health organization, it would appear that the state would want to promote programming that would assist the thousands of individuals who were once institutionalized. Many of these people seek support through clubhouses, and I see the effect that the state institutions have had on them. This is one reason why I strongly oppose the Governor's proposed budget reductions to services that would assist individuals achieve recovery, or at least find purpose in their existence in the community; this includes Legal Services, line T363.

Cuts to services like Connecticut Legal Rights Project would mean that there would be lay-offs to staff or an increase in their already maxed out case loads, resulting in less assistance available to our most vulnerable community members. It would be a "lose -lose" situation across the board. Research demonstrates the negative outcomes associated with inadequate aid to individuals with psychiatric disabilities. There are higher rates of homelessness, involvement with the criminal justice system, costly inpatient care, so somehow the budget will reflect the cost. Funding legal aid is working towards preventing the more costly negative outcomes.

I do understand that because the economy is in such bad shape that cuts need to be made somewhere, but making cuts to services for people with disabilities and yes ( mental illness is a disability no different than any other in that it hinders people who suffer from it in one way or another) is not the answer. A lot of people who depend on state services such as the one I've mentioned need these services because they may not be able to afford these services on their own.

Many of us, myself included, have a limited incomes, but are working extremely hard to not depend on state assistance. Like myself, there are many individuals who are working and going to school, so they can get ahead. Sometimes though we are discriminated against because all people see us for is mentally ill. Legal services give us an option to rise above discrimination and continue on a positive trajectory.

I urge you to take this into consideration before you make a decision that could seriously hurt a lot of hard working people who receive services. I respectfully urge you to reconsider your proposed reduction to legal aid for people in recovery from mental illness and other disabilities.

Thank you for your public service to the State of Connecticut and for considering my position.

Respectfully,

Joshua Seavey

Member of Join Rise Be  
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